

# WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT ANARCHY:

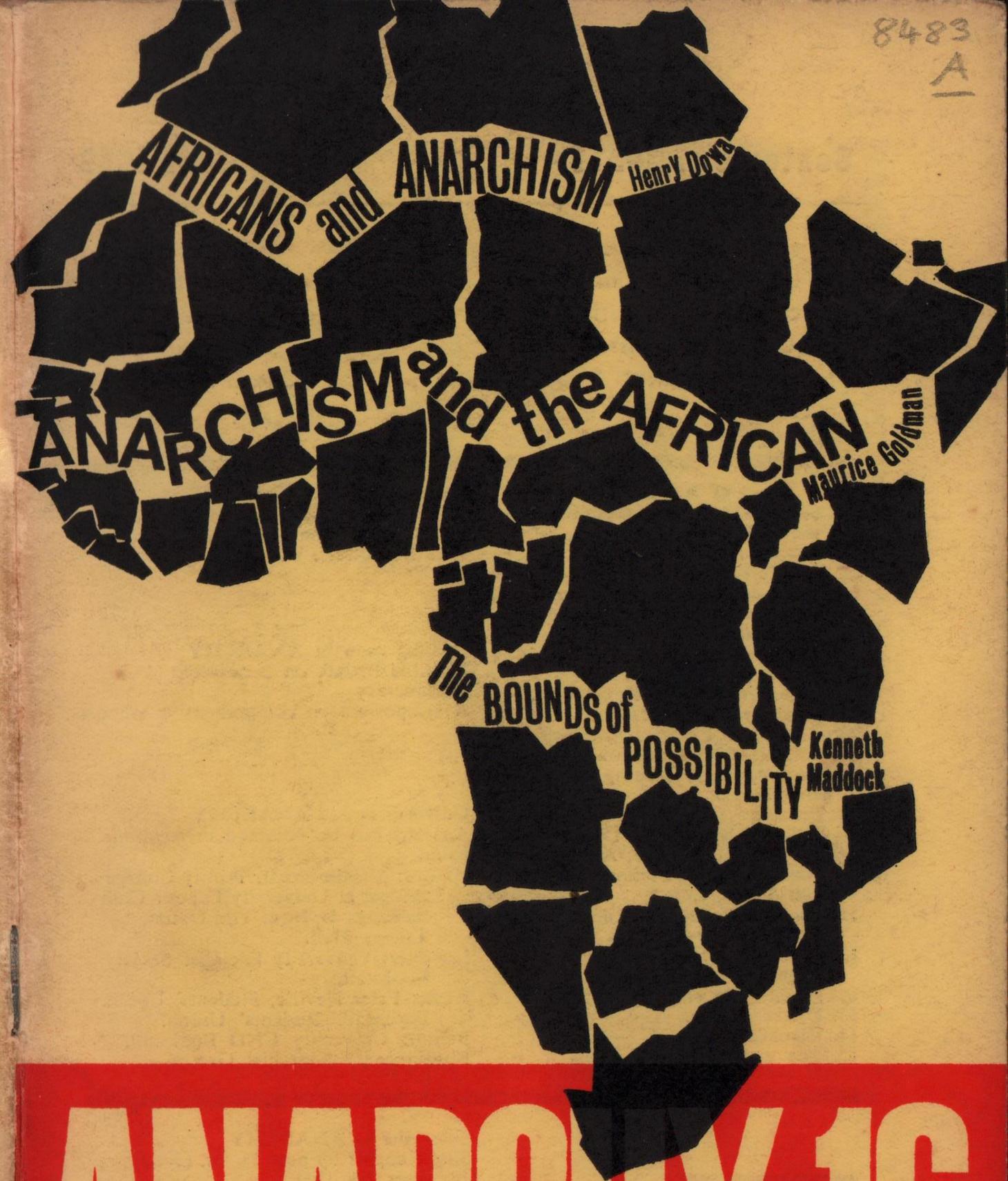
"Now that it has completed a year of publication one can say confidently that it is one of the most stimulating magazines now appearing in this country . . . In almost every article ANARCHY shows a passionate concern for the way in which individual human beings are prevented from developing, and at the same time there is a vision of the unfulfilled potentialities of every human being . . ."

—RICHARD BOSTON in *Peace News*, 23 Feb., 1962.

"To evoke its tone and contents I can best say this. In my own writing about the social scene I have tried to discover, even guess at, realities behind our lives in the past decade, and if I have succeeded at all in this I'm bound to say I have little to help me in the 'informed journals of opinion'. In fact, a prodigious gift for *not* seeing what's really going on in England seems to me their most striking—and soothing—characteristic. To this intellectual-spiritual torpor ANARCHY is an absolute exception, and you do not need to accept anarchist ideas at all to find more surprising, revealing information about our country than in any other journal that I know of. That ANARCHY is relatively little read does not surprise or dismay me, though it may do its editorial board. For I have found through long and frustrating experience that the degree to which the ideas of any journal are realistic, and of ultimate power of germinal penetration into human minds, is in direct inverse relation to its circulation and apparent material success."

—COLIN MACINNES in *The Queen*, 15 May, 1962.

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# ANARCHY 16

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST IDEAS

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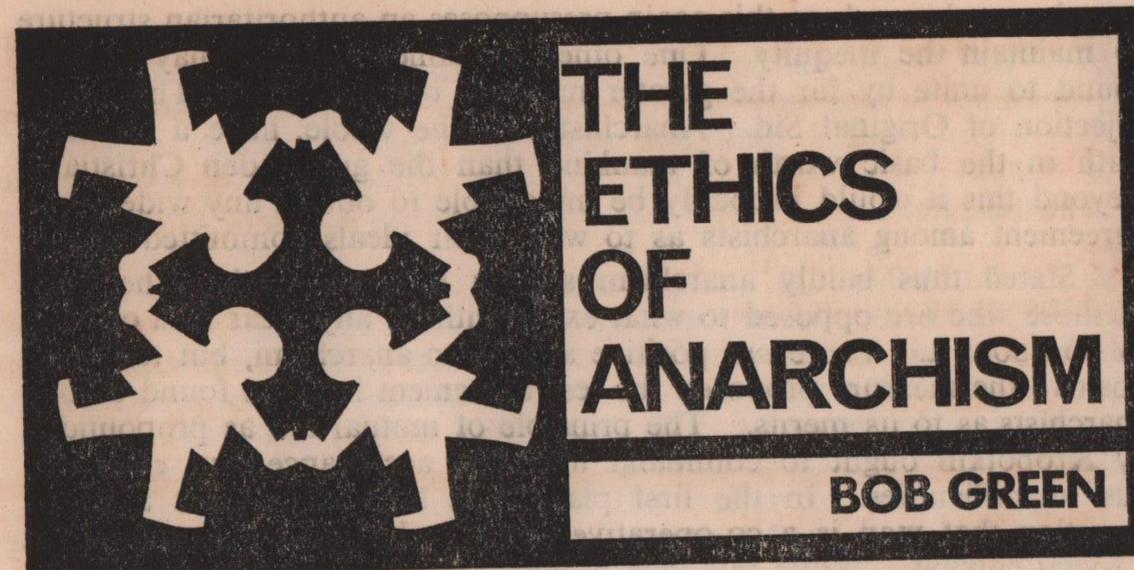
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UNLIKE CHRISTIANITY WHICH HAS ITS Ten Commandments and The Sermon on the Mount, or Communism with its Manifesto, anarchism has no single authoritative statement of its aims or values. In this lies both the strength and weakness of anarchism. Without a cast iron creed there is less risk of being wedded to dogma. There is also considerable scope for skating rapidly over thin ice and avoiding uncomfortable issues.

A perusal of anarchist writers and personal contact with those currently active within the movement gives rise to the suspicion that anarchism is all things to all men. There are pacifist anarchists and violent anarchists, atheist anarchists and Catholic anarchists, evolutionary and revolutionary anarchists, altruistic and egotistic anarchists, back-to-nature anarchists and brave-new-technological-world anarchists; there are anarchists who vote and others who marry; some who see money as the symbol of all that is rotten in our social order and others who regard it as a useful medium of exchange, not in itself evil. All use it. There are even capitalist anarchists—and there are many who contrive to make a comfortable living within the plexus of a capitalist system. There may even be some anarchists who beat their wives or children—reluctantly, we trust.

What, then, is the common ground that enables all those holding these diverse viewpoints to call themselves anarchists? At a guess there is only one principle to which all would at least pay lip service. All express mistrust of, or show active opposition to the authoritarian element to be found in any social system from the family to the State.

From this rather broad general principle stem several subsidiary principles to which most, though not necessarily all, anarchists would subscribe. There is usually a rejection of entrenched privilege, since this almost inevitably requires an authoritarian underpinning. There is also a feeling that the domination or exploitation of man by man

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is to be condemned, as this again presupposes an authoritarian structure to maintain the inequity. One other fundamental issue may also be found to unite by far the greater majority of anarchists. This is the rejection of Original Sin. Anarchists, on the whole, have a lot more faith in the basic worth of mankind than the guilt-laden Christians. Beyond this it would probably be impossible to obtain any widespread agreement among anarchists as to what their ideals committed them.

Stated thus baldly anarchism sounds little more than the bleat of those who are opposed to what exists without any clear idea of what to do about it. There *are* positive aspects to anarchism, but the more positive the measure proposed the less agreement is to be found among anarchists as to its merits. The principle of mutual aid as propounded by Kropotkin ought to command universal acceptance, but even this has its difficulties. In the first place it is little more than a vague assertion that man is a co-operative animal who finds his meaning in a social context. While this idea is both laudable and almost certainly true, it will hardly serve to distinguish anarchists from Christians or Communists, let alone from humanists, rationalists or others of a humanitarian persuasion.

In the second place, there would appear to be a section of self-styled anarchists who might find the concept of mutual aid little to their taste. These are the egotistic anarchists whose declared overriding concern is with Number One. For this brand of anarchist mutual aid is only to be espoused insofar as it furthers the interests of the self-centred creature pursuing his narrow ends. He is concerned with opposing authority or achieving social aims only when he is directly affected. If he seeks the freedom of others it is because he sees this as a necessary condition of his own freedom. Logically, if such an anarchist were world dictator he would have arrived at his Nirvana.

He may try to escape this dilemma by avowing that he could not be happy as world dictator where other men are not free, and it is his personal happiness that he is seeking. However, this is anarchism by default, not from any commitment to anarchist principles. Given a straightforward choice between personal happiness and the happiness of others the egotistic anarchist has no scruples. It is only to the extent that the happiness of others coincides with his own well-being that he is a social animal at all. For him, then, mutual aid is a means to an end—his personal welfare. And it is only while mutual aid serves this limited end that it finds his favour. For such anarchists the answer to the question first posed is easily answered. They are not essentially humanitarian. The egotistic anarchist quite frankly doesn't give a damn for anyone but himself. His feelings for mankind and the common weal are strictly subsidiary to his self interests.

Perhaps this is not the kindest way of presenting a Stirnerite view. In some ways there is little to choose between the conscious egotist and the enlightened self-interest of the 19th century utilitarians. There is a shift in emphasis, however, in that the Stirnerite is incensed by

the hypocrisy of those Puritans and do-gooders who wish to stuff their sanctimonious pretensions down defenceless throats—the “This hurts me more than it hurts you”—Sado-masochistic syndrome of the Sunday Observance misery mongers. If these and their kidney would only pursue their own happiness with just half the zeal they muster to pursue the unhappiness of others the world would be a much pleasanter place for all concerned.

In sharp contrast to the egotistic type is the individual whose anarchism is also derivative, but from the opposite direction. This kind of anarchist is first and foremost a humanitarian; he subscribes to anarchism simply because he believes that personal freedom is a vital conditions for human happiness. For him anarchism is again a means and not an end in itself. He differs from the egotistic anarchist in that his cardinal concern is with the welfare of mankind rather than the pursuit of personal goals. Given the choice between his own happiness and that of others he is, in principle, prepared to sacrifice his own interests to what he conceives to be the greater good.

Kropotkin and Godwin seem to have been men of this ilk. Their writings give the overwhelming impression that they are involved in mankind to a rare degree. Whereas Marx directs his moral indignation against the hated capitalist class, the humanitarians are moved by compassion for those exploited by the system. Marx sees the horrors of the Industrial Revolution in abstract terms of supply and demand, monopolies and flow of money, where the humanitarians feel for the victims and seek alleviation of their distress. Marx is hungry to believe in the cataclysmic revolution that will sweep away the tyrants; Kropotkin would prefer to believe, and Godwin did believe, that men can change their hearts and live in harmony without the benefit of an initial blood bath.

While Kropotkin and Godwin had more real love for their fellow men it must be admitted that Marx was the better scholar. This, however, is incidental. The point is that Kropotkin and Godwin represent a type of anarchist who is essentially humanitarian. Such men believe in anarchism only because they conceive that man needs freedom to be happy as he needs breath to live. Convince such an anarchist that man would be happier, more content, more at peace with himself and society, more fulfilled as an individual, under some other system—say a benevolent meritocracy—and he would be prepared to yield on his anarchist principles.

These, then, are the two main types of derivative anarchists—the egotists and the humanitarians. As a rule the egotists are more given to the apocalyptic vision, while the humanitarians are more likely to be of pacifist persuasion with an evolutionary approach. There is no logical necessity in this, though there is an emotional link; it is just that the egotist is more willing and eager to give free rein to his aggressive impulses.

For similar reasons the Sermon on the Mount anarchist is more likely to be found in the humanitarian ranks, with the militant atheist among the egotists. It is only fair to point out that most anarchists

are inclined to agnosticism or plain indifference to religion, though nearly all are implacably opposed to organised religious movements with their hierarchical structure, authoritarian mood, traditional dogma, and mutilation of the young.

The third distinct group comprises what might be termed the hard-core or fundamentalist anarchists. This breed has a philosophy that is in no sense derivative. Anarchism for these folk is a faith that they will go with right down the line. If in opposing authority they risk destroying themselves, then this is a price they are prepared to pay. If the happiness of mankind is opposed to their anarchist ideals, so much the worse for mankind.

In its way this viewpoint is as ruthless as that of the egotist. If anarchism is incompatible with the modern technological society, then back to hair shirts and the primitive rural community. The argument runs that if the anarchist ideal is worth anything at all then sacrifices must be made to further the ideal. Bakunin falls fairly into this category, as do a substantial proportion of the blood and tears brigade.

Before dismissing these dedicated souls as just another brand of fanatic it is worth considering what is implied by this school of thought. Here, if anywhere, we should be able to uncover the basic tenets of anarchism. If these people are not moved by simple egotism or broad compassion, where do they find their zeal?

As far as can be made out the philosophy goes something like this: Man, the social animal, can never realise his full potential as an individual so long as he is involved in any authoritarian structure, whether as victim or oppressor. To be involved in an authoritarian system, be it religious, military, political, educational, within the family, at work or play is to accept a limitation to the growth of the individual; to be less than one might be. It is this refusal to accept the authoritarian condition whatever its benefits, material or emotional, because of the stunting of an individual's potential, that characterises the fundamental anarchist position. The central value is not the happiness of mankind nor that of the individual—it is an almost mystical belief in the individual himself. Whatever stands between the individual and the realisation of his full potential must be swept aside, no matter the cost.

But just what is this potential that an individual must be free to develop? It is here that the philosophy gets a bit woolly. Perhaps the most enlightening statement of the position has been made not by an avowed anarchist, but by Erich Fromm and Carl Rogers, both psychotherapists. In *Escape from Freedom* and *Man for Himself* Fromm discusses at length the implications of this article of faith. Rogers in *Counselling and Psychotherapy* and *Client Centred Therapy* puts forward a similar view of the nature of man. As a result of their clinical observations Fromm and Rogers believe that children grow best and patients recover best in a free social environment. By "best" is meant the development of a more adequate, diversified personality and a happier, more creative individual.

This psychological growth process they believe to be as natural and spontaneous as physical growth. All you have to do is provide the right conditions and the individual will do the rest. And the right conditions they are quite adamant, are non-authoritarian conditions. Given a non-authoritarian family background and a Froebel type, or similar free environment education, the individual will grow into a happy, creative, co-operative, good-hearted, positive social being. All the inner resources will be mobilised to make the most of life. Without such conditions the individual will, to some degree, be stunted and warped, far from happy, not very creative, co-operative to only a limited extent, evincing illwill rather than goodwill for his fellow men, destructive and negativistic. In other words, socially sick.

In their turn such individuals will pass on their disease to those with whom they are in contact, particularly their children, who will react negativistically to reinforce the symptoms. Unhappiness begets unhappiness, illwill begets illwill, and so on. The victim is caught in a vicious circle and compulsively forges his chains day by day. Yet, all the time within him is a yearning for happiness, creativity, a striving for acceptance and love. The victim wants to be wanted, but cannot set in motion the wheels that will release him from his bondage to the past.

To reverse this malignant process a special set of therapeutic conditions is necessary. The patient, as he has become, is provided with a benign environment in which he is accepted without question, without condemnation, for what he is. If he confesses to having put the dog through the mangle that morning, then the therapist controls his own feelings of horror, and expresses only interest in the why and wherefore of such aberrant behaviour, encourages the patient to talk, to put his point of view, to reveal the emotional content behind the action.

Within this extremely permissive atmosphere the patient has a chance to find himself, to examine and understand the springs of his own conduct, and eventually to shed the straightjacket of his past. Like Brutus he learns to look inside himself for the key to his fortunes. He assumes responsibility for his own conduct; takes command of his own life; learns to believe in himself again.

So, if the psychotherapists are right, anarchists have spotted something about the nature of man previously overlooked by other schools of thought. Man is not by nature steeped in Original Sin, nor is he simply an economic animal. Basically, he is driven neither by guilt nor greed but by an overwhelming urge to grow, to diversify, to make the most of himself as an individual in a social context. He is driven towards the stars by something inside himself that will not accept limitations.

Society as currently structured does not make it easy for him to pursue this course. Family, school, church and job often conspire to frustrate his vital urge to grow—precisely because of their authoritarian structure.

All the time he is consciously or unconsciously seeking ways round and through these artificial barriers to growth. Where the barriers prove too strong the pent up energy may eventually break with explosive force into criminality—the individual's protest, or war—the bursting of a whole society's abscess.

Anarchism, by recognising this basic urge to growth within the individual, draws attention to those aspects of the social system that thwart or warp such growth. Anarchism is not concerned with specifics such as monogamy versus polygamy or polyandry. All it insists on is that the family, whatever else it may or may not be, must be non-authoritarian in its structure. It is not concerned with whether children should be taught arts or science subjects at School, only that the school should be non-authoritarian in outlook. It is not, in any essential sense, opposed to religion—only to religious bigotry. And in capitalism, socialism and communism it sees the same fault—all are authoritarian and all restrict the growth of the individuals trapped within them.

Here, then, is the basic article of faith of the hard core anarchist; man can discover what is best in himself only under non-authoritarian conditions.

It is easier to see now why anarchism appears at first glance to offer so little by way of positive content. Its basic premiss provides a touchstone for deciding personal conduct, but does not lead with logical necessity to any particular social system. It tells us what is wrong with established systems without providing a blue print of the ideal society. It can tell us only that the ideal society must be non-authoritarian—and this condition could hold for a diverse number of societies that differ in their family traditions, educational systems, religious beliefs and economic structure.

In passing it should be pointed out that in attempting to analyse the value systems of anarchists it is not suggested that they can be sorted into three neat piles, egotistic, humanitarian and hard core. Many anarchists possibly most, have never bothered to consider to what extent their anarchism is based on self interest, a love of mankind, or an article of faith concerning the nature of man. Elements of all three may probably be found in various proportions in all anarchists.

Quite complex arrangements of these values are possible. An anarchist may be essentially humanitarian in his dealings with his fellow men while being more ruthless with himself. He might, for instance, refrain from encouraging some young person from breaking with an authoritarian family because of the ensuing unhappiness, while having been quite prepared to make such a break himself, and damn the consequences. That is, he is prepared to stand on his own feet, come hell or high water, while recognising that others may not be able to find sufficient strength within themselves under the same circumstance.

There is a wider issue involved here. Anarchists on the whole are more willing to face up to the shortcomings of society, less gullible regarding patriotism, church-going, marriage, prisons and the thousand

and one social institutions accepted without question by the vast majority of their fellow citizens. There is a ruthless pursuit of truth with regard to society to be found elsewhere only among professional social anthropologists as a rule.

It does not follow that anarchists are any more willing to face up to the truth about themselves. On the contrary, most have learned to externalise their aggression, finding fault with society rather than burdening themselves with a sense of inadequacy or guilt. This is not to suggest that in choosing to debunk the holy cows worshipped by others, anarchists have found a comfortable resolution of personal problems. They have in fact chosen to reject the bogus values of present day society the hard way. Little comfort or support can be expected from their family, workmates or other associates. This in turn exposes the anarchist to the dangers of a holier-than-thou attitude. Having suffered and been shriven in the pursuit of social truths the anarchist is all too prone to the temptation of parading his unpalatable discoveries before unwilling victims. Moral indignation is all right as steam in the boiler, but it makes a dangerous star to steer by.

Which brings us to the crux of a moral dilemma faced by any humanitarian, anarchist or otherwise. Many, if not most, people prefer happiness to truth. A few will pursue truth wherever the trail may lead and whatever the cost. A worthy, even heroic, stand to take—provided the pursuer is the one who suffers in the cause. But what if, as a result of pursuing truth, others are made to suffer in a cause not of their choosing? Noble self-sacrifice is in danger of degenerating into the cruel imposition of suffering onto others less fitted, perhaps, to survive the onslaught. The medical practitioner has long since learned that the last thing most of his patients want to hear is the clear, unvarnished truth. Some, of course, are motivated less by sympathy than by a desire to play God—the omniscient Almighty who dispenses only as much information as he thinks you are fitted to receive. Nevertheless, many people would much prefer not to be told that they are about to shuffle off this mortal coil, and to impose the painful truth would be a heartless addition to their misery.

There is a multitude of other truths, too, that come too near the knuckle for comfort. Self knowledge and happiness are all too often incompatible; and who is to say which is the "right" choice for others? An anarchist may prefer the cold light of reason, but he is in no better case than the Sunday Observance fanatic when it comes to justifying scourging of the innocents in the name of the cause they do not espouse.

Similarly, most people would appear to place a sense of security higher than a need for personal freedom. Anarchists may deplore this, and even marvel at the perfidy of their weaker brethren, but the fact remains that most people do not share the anarchist's appetite for freedom to the extent of wishing to make the sacrifices involved. It follows that if anarchists are humanitarians then they will insist on paying the price for freedom themselves, but will leave those who prefer their chains to their own devices.

The only snag with this argument is that many anarchists suspect that freedom, like peace, is indivisible. In which case others must be made free, like it or lump it. The system that enslaves those who prefer enslavement also enslaves both anarchists, who would choose otherwise, and children, who will form the next generation of emotional cripples.

Hence the moral dilemma. Whatever happens someone is going to get hurt. All the humanitarian can do is to weigh up the issues involved on each specific occasion and decide whether and where to throw his weight into the balance. The average bonehead, for example, seems quite content with the laws on abortion and homosexuality in this country, despite the fact that these laws seem designed to ensure the maximum amount of misery for all, and happiness for none. On these particular issues there is no doubt where you will find the anarchists—which, as it so happens, is where you will also find the humanitarians.

Not all issues, however, are anything like so clear cut. Such vicious laws are readily opposed because the suffering is universal and not confined to the masochistic pea-brains who support them. But what of the law relating to drunken driving? As things stand the abolition of this law would undoubtedly lead to an increase of slaughter on the roads. It is here that the humanitarian and hard core anarchist part company. And also where the hard core anarchist gets dismissed as a crank by many who are otherwise sympathetic to anarchist ideals. This does not prove that the hard core anarchist is wrong—only that he is willing to pay a far higher price for his personal freedom than the vast majority. At least, he *says* he would pay this price, but one wonders if a lively encounter or two with drunken motorists would modify his ardour. A broken limb, loss of sight, or death of his child might make the price seem excessive.

Anarchists face another dilemma with regard to the role of violence in their scheme of things. A resolution of differences by the use of violence is, by definition, an imposed settlement. Yet, anarchism by its very nature is committed to non-authoritarian solutions. Hence, it may be argued, the anarchist is precluded from the use of violence in promoting his ideals, as this would involve repudiating his basic premiss. On these grounds the humanitarian, the pacifist, and the evolutionary anarchist find common cause in rejecting the proposition that a free society can be brought about by violent revolution. The end precludes such means. Governments may be overthrown in a matter of hours, but the hearts of men do not change overnight. A free society presupposes men nurtured in freedom. The present generation has acquired a taste for its chains and wouldn't give a thank you for the sort of society envisaged by anarchists. It follows that the revolutionary dream would prove to be a nightmare. There are no short cuts to the free society. The problem is basically educational, and the process is inevitably a long one. The most that can be hoped and worked for is that the next generation will be less authoritarian in outlook than the present one.

This is a gradualist point of view, held in contempt and vilified as "reformism" by the revolutionary anarchist, usually a hard core specimen, sometimes an egotist. There is a powerful counter-argument to thoroughgoing pacifism. Violence can, in the long run, be met effectively only by violence. Gandhian passive resistance, the usual alternative offered by pacifists, is a technique with only limited application. It worked in India only because the British were not willing to go the whole way against the courageous men and women who lay on the railway tracks. It could not, and did not, work in Nazi Germany. The ghosts of an army of Jehovah's Witnesses bear silent testimony to this unpleasant fact. Their passive resistance led them straight to the gas-chambers. Hitler recognised only one argument—might is right.

The revolutionary anarchist then points out that Hitler was simply an extreme example of the authoritarian in naked action. All governments are fundamentally authoritarian. They believe in and rely on the threat of violence to maintain their position. Their police and soldiers are trained in violence and will attack anyone designated as an enemy by those in power, be they CND passive resisters or colonial peoples struggling for national independence. And, again, the only argument with meaning in these circumstances is the one conducted in the language of violence. Those in power will not yield their power and privileges without a fight. So, eventually, like a good Marxist, the lover of freedom must be prepared for the violent uprising which holds out the only hope of sweeping away the armed citadels of entrenched privilege.

The main drawback to this argument is historical fact. When oppressive governments have been swept away by armed revolt the outcome has often turned out to be quite as unsavoury as the original evil. One authoritarian regime is ousted and another rises from the ashes. The net result—a pile of corpses, lots of work for the artificial limb industry, and a new set of backsides in the seats of power. Ride the tiger, and you'll end up inside it.

Nevertheless, there have been revolutions that on balance seem to have been justified, and without doubt there have been cases where the radical and violent course would have saved mankind a lot of unnecessary suffering. The greater happiness of a large section of mankind, for example, would almost certainly have been served had someone had the nerve and foresight to pop a bomb in Hitler's pyjamas in the early 1930's. And a similar kind of service would have done Torquemada a power of no-good.

Where the evolutionary and revolutionary anarchists fail to agree is on the question of where to draw the line. When in doubt the evolutionary anarchist prefers a cautious "wait and see" policy, on the grounds that to incur a very certain evil in the name of a very speculative good is a transaction of dubious worth. In the same circumstances the revolutionary anarchist displays less patience and more panache. Who is in the right on any given occasion would appear to be largely a matter of opinion, and what you care to believe largely a question of

temperament. Even the most pacific humanitarian with a utilitarian ethic will agree, however, that there comes a time to dig your heels in and fight it out. This is when the very certain immediate evil follows from pacifism—as with the gas chambers.

So much for the inner conflicts of the humanitarian cum hard core anarchists. Other forms of heart searching are just as complicated. An anarchist may recognise in himself a large egotistical streak without being proud of it. That is, part of his motive in pursuing anarchism is pure self-interest, but this for him is not what justifies his belief in anarchism. He may see such egotism as ancillary to his basic belief, possibly irrelevant, possibly as a personal weakness opposed to what he really wants to stand for.

On the other side of the coin, the egotistic anarchist who makes a song and dance about his dedication to self interest may be covering up humanitarian feelings which he fears may be taken as a sign of weakness, exposing him to exploitation by leeches of one kind or another. Or he may quite simply abhor the idea of being taken for a humbug.

And so on. The permutations are as many and diverse as there are anarchists. They are united only in their opposition to authoritarian systems. As a philosophy anarchism is hardly more systematic or less emotional than existentialism and nihilism, with which it has historical links. As a movement it can never sweep the country like Protestantism or Socialism as it has no blueprint, no rallying point, no central organisation, no leader to direct and channel the social forces it wishes to arouse. The most effective anarchists have either been propagandists, like Kropotkin, or pioneers in the educational field like Homer Lane and A. S. Neill. In the industrial field neither syndicalism nor mutual aid has fired the imagination of any significant proportion of the population. So far from being interested in workers' control, the average worker cannot be bothered to take an active part in Union activities.

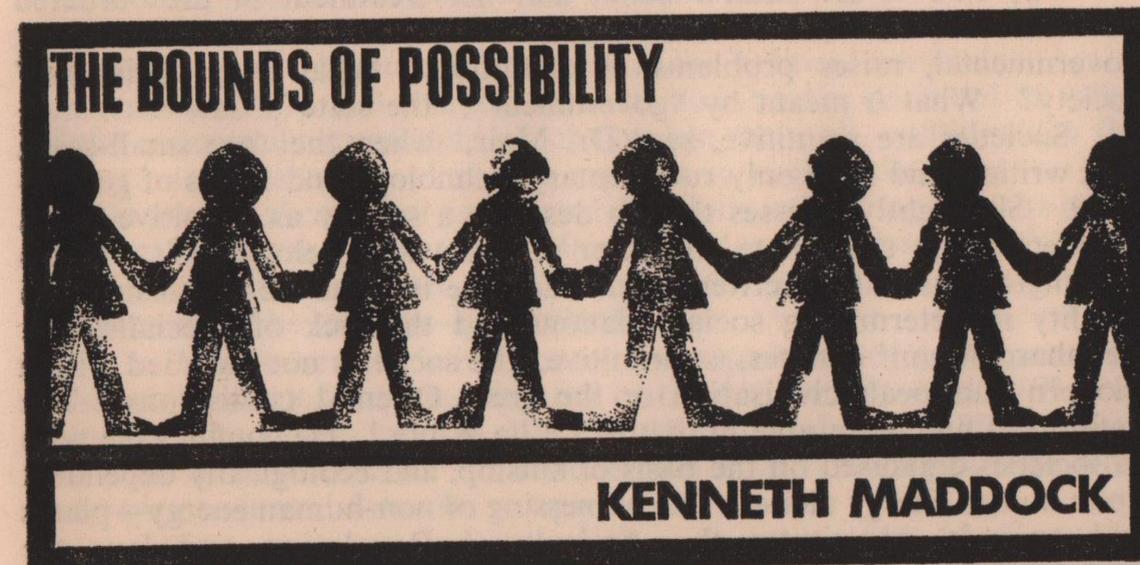
Individuals can solve this problem by becoming self-employed, but as our industrial units become still larger and more complex the prospects for syndicalism become yet more remote. Which may help to explain why the average sort of bloke finds anarchism as pie-in-the-sky as any other religious vision.

However, even in the industrial field things are not as gloomy as they might appear. The social sciences lend support to the anarchist point of view, and it is only a question of time before we begin to apply what we have learned and are learning about the social needs of man to education, family life, and industrial organisation.

In the meantime anarchists can continue to protest against the authoritarian aspects of all our social institutions. By propaganda they can present their ideas as clearly and cogently as possible. By modifying the institutions whenever they have the chance they can demonstrate a better way of doing things. By their day-to-day behaviour and personal contact with other people they can display the more intimate social consequences of the non-authoritarian viewpoint. They cannot

change the educational system of this country overnight, but they can easily make sure that their own children are not beaten at school, just as they can refrain from using this primitive argument at home.

By exposing the shortcomings of authoritarian pseudo-solutions to social problems they can hope by precept and action to strike the same spark of protest off in those who long since gave up hope. When enough people have seen through the swindle of authoritarian systems clearly enough to feel cheated themselves, then it won't matter whether they vote with their hands or their feet. One way or another society will just have to move in an anarchist direction.



THE DEPTH-STUDIES WHICH ANTHROPOLOGISTS MAKE are a dimension in our perception of the human condition. In its ecology, its social life, its beliefs and values and artistic achievements, each society is a microcosm. It can be studied, evaluated and compared to other microcosms in an attempt to gauge the bounds of possibility. In this way we can enlarge our understanding of social systems, past and present, our own and others. Is government necessary? Is law? Or religion? And, if so, in what forms? In this article I propose to discuss some interesting points raised by a recent anthropological book. Lucy Mair's new Pelican, *Primitive Government*, surveys the political life of some East African societies, several of which have been regarded by the anthropologists who studied them as being without government. Dr. Mair's contentious point is that the "ordered anarchies" described in such books as *The Nuer* and *Tribes Without Rulers*, are not really anarchic at all. Government is ubiquitous. This, and one or two other cavils, aside, her book is a most useful introduction to its subject; and we can only hope that Penguin Books will go on to balance their series on history, archaeology, philosophy and psychology with one on anthropology.

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Dr Mair divides her book into three parts: "Government Without the State", "African States" and "Primitive Government and Modern Times". There is also a short introduction in which she discusses her conceptual framework. The reading list, with which *Primitive Government* concludes, is not quite so complete as it should be. *Tribes Without Rulers* is omitted, though two of the essays from it are cited in the text. If *African Political Systems* deserves its place in the reading list, then so, too, does the later collection. And I think Max Gluckman's *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, based on his Third Programme talks, should have been included.

The title of Dr Mair's book, and her treatment of the "ordered anarchies" (a term she does not apply to them herself), as stateless but governmental, raises problems of definition. What is a "primitive" society? What is meant by "government", "the state", "law"?

Societies are primitive, says Dr. Mair,<sup>1</sup> when they are small-scale, lack writing, and have only rudimentary technology and forms of government. She rightly stresses that to describe a society as primitive is not a reflection on the innate character of those who belong to it. Ralph Piddington<sup>2</sup> uses these criteria, but adds the importance of kinship and locality in determining social relations and the lack of specialisation. Leonhard Adam<sup>3</sup> denotes, as primitive, the societies not included within modern European civilisation or the great Oriental civilisations. The definition I find preferable in that of Leslie White.<sup>4</sup> He confines the term to societies organised on the basis of kinship, and ecologically dependent upon human energy alone. The harnessing of non-human energy—plants and animals—constitutes the Agricultural Revolution and lays the ecological foundation of civil society, in which kinship diminishes in importance. Centralised political institutions and class-divisions appear. In White's sense, some of the societies dealt with by Dr. Mair are not

However crude and ineffectual primitive cultures were in their control over the forces of nature, they had worked out a system of human relationships that has never been equalled since the Agricultural Revolution. The warm, substantial bonds of kinship united man with man. There were no lords or vassals, serfs or slaves, in tribal society. In social ritual one man might make obeisance to another, but no one kept another in bondage and lived upon the fruits of his labour. There were no mortgages, rents, debtors, or usurers in primitive society, and no one was ever sent to prison for stealing food to feed his children. Food was not adulterated with harmful substances in order to make money out of human misery. There were no time clocks, no bosses or overseers, in primitive society, and a two-week vacation was not one's quota of freedom for a year.

Crude and limited as primitive cultures may have been technologically, and wretched and poor as life may have been for many—but far from all—people living in tribal organisation, their social systems based upon kinship and characterised by liberty, equality, and fraternity were unquestionably more congenial to the human primate's nature, and more compatible with his psychic needs and aspirations, than any other that has ever been realised in any of the cultures subsequent to the Agricultural Revolution, including our own society today.

—LESLIE A. WHITE: *The Evolution of Culture*, 1959.

primitive at all, but represent early forms of civil society (this would be true of the "African States" dealt with in Part Two. The Part One societies would, I think, be transitional between primitive and civil. There is, however, no unanimity on the use of "primitive"; Dr. Mair's definition is conventional, but White's has the merit of denoting a logical class and thus is helpful in arranging social systems in some kind of evolutionary sequence.

"Government" is another term whose boundaries are amorphous. To anarchists, of course, it has emotional connotations, but in considering the use of a word by a writer who defines what *his* meaning is, attention should be directed to the referent, not to the emotional undertones. Dr. Mair defines government functionally: "What then does government do? It protects members of the political community against lawlessness within and enemies without; and it takes decisions on behalf of the community in matters which concern them all, and in which they have to act together."<sup>5</sup> I should say that in such societies as the Nuer, people protect *themselves* and regard decisions as binding only the person who makes them. What Dr. Mair considers governmental functions could pertinently be interpreted as co-ordination without compulsion, the dream of the anarcho-syndicalists.

Dr. Mair's novelty is her conceptual separation of government and state while maintaining the ubiquity of the former. In *African Political Systems*, M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard define the state by presence of government. In dividing the political systems with which they are concerned into two categories, they write:

One group . . . consists of those societies which have centralised authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions—in short, a government—and in which cleavages of wealth, privilege, and status correspond to the distribution of power and authority . . . The other group . . . consists of those societies which lack centralised authority, administrative machinery, and constituted judicial institutions—in short which lack government—and in which there are no sharp divisions of rank, status, or wealth . . . Those who consider that a state should be defined by the presence of governmental institutions will regard the first group as primitive states and the second group as stateless societies.<sup>6</sup>

In *Anarchism*, Paul Eltzbacher gives a definition of the state which, in essence, conforms to what Fortes and Evans-Pritchard have said about government:

Some inhabitants of a territory are so powerful that their will is competent to affect the inhabitants of this territory in their procedure, and these men will have it that for all the inhabitants of the territory, for themselves as well as for the rest, the will of men picked out in a certain way shall within certain limits be finally regulative. When such is the condition of things, a State exists.<sup>7</sup>

In *The Evolution of Culture*, White makes essentially the same points, but reminds us that government has two faces:

Civil societies are characterised by a number of diverse parts and specialised functions, on the one hand, and a special mechanism of co-ordination, integration, and control, on the other. This special mechanism should have a name, and we have decided to call it the *state-church*. We do this because this mechanism always has both a secular and civil aspect and an ecclesiastical aspect; *state* and *church* properly designate *aspects* of this co-ordinative, integrative mechanism rather than separate entities.<sup>8</sup>

Mikhail Bakunin, too, understood the dual nature of government;<sup>9</sup> and Dr. Mair discusses the relation of divinity and ritual to kingly office.<sup>10</sup>

"Law", again, is a semantic nightmare. At one pole, there is A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's well-known definition: "social control through the systematic application of the force of politically organised society"<sup>11</sup>—a definition he borrowed from the jurist Pound. In *Tribes Without Rulers*, David Tait states that law in this sense does not exist among the Konkomba.<sup>12</sup> "In a strict sense Nuer have no law"<sup>13</sup> says Evans-Pritchard, though he goes on to define the term in a sense he considers appropriate for this people:

We speak of "law" here in the sense which seems most appropriate when writing of the Nuer, a moral obligation to settle disputes by conventional methods, and not in the sense of legal procedure or of legal institutions. We speak only of civil law, for there do not seem to be any actions considered injurious to the whole community and punished by it.<sup>14</sup>

At the other pole, is Malinowski's definition of law: "The rules of law stand out from the rest in that they are felt and regarded as the obligations of one person and the rightful claims of another."<sup>15</sup> Such definitions as his are unsatisfactory, for they blur the differential classes of sanction existing for the varied rights and obligations of members of a society.<sup>16</sup>

"Law" in Malinowski's sense exists in every society; in Radcliffe-Brown's sense it exists only in some, e.g., in the African states discussed in Part Two of *Primitive Government*. Dr. Mair understandably refrains from offering a new definition; she sensibly confines herself to discussing the ways in which disputes are in fact settled in the societies with which she is concerned.

Before leaving the semantic morass in which concepts of "the state", "law" and so on are embogged, we can note that the classical anarchists were agreed in their negation of the state, in the sense in which Eltzbacher defined it, but were divided on the issue of law. Godwin, Stirner and Tolstoy were *anomistic*, they negated law. Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Tucker were *nomistic*, they affirmed law, though without being unanimous on its content.<sup>17</sup> Law or not, therefore, the Nuer, the Konkomba and the rest can accurately be called "ordered anarchies".

I do not accept Dr. Mair's view that government can exist independently of the state, or, rather, I think that the term government is best jettisoned in describing how co-ordination is effected in societies without the state form. In reference to the Tiv, Laura Bohannan wrote in *Tribes Without Rulers*:

... a segmentary system of this sort functions not despite but through the absence of an indigenous concept of "the political". Only the intricate interrelations of interests and loyalties through the interconnection of cultural ideology, systems of social grouping, and organisation of institutions and the consequent moral enforcement of each by the other, enables the society to work. To isolate part of it as "political" may be correct, insofar as our definition of the political is concerned, but to do so robs the society of those very factors which endow it with vitality.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Bohannan's approach seems to me to be the most fruitful, and

the one which is most faithful to the reality of the stateless societies. In the remainder of this essay, I will take a look at the principles underlying the everyday conduct of life in some of these societies.

The Nuer, a people of about 200,000 in the Southern Sudan, were the subject of Evans-Pritchard's classic study, *The Nuer*. He is the first social anthropologist to have given a detailed account of what are now known as segmentary lineage systems. The characteristic of such systems is that the parts are in conflict and opposition; yet the whole does not disintegrate. Why this seeming paradox should be so, I now hope to show.

The Nuer consist of several tribes, each of which segments, according to circumstance, into smaller and still smaller sections. Thus the Lou tribe segments into the Mor and Gun primary sections; Gun into Rumjok and Gaathal secondary sections; Gaathal into Leng and Nyarkwac tertiary sections. In turn, the tertiary sections segment into Nuerland's basic units, the village communities. Mor and Rumjok also segment in this way; and what is true of the Lou is true of every Nuer tribe.

Corresponding to the segmentation into territorial sections, and providing a moral or ideological framework for it, is a segmentation into lineages. (A lineage is a social group whose members are united by an ideology of common descent. A number of them form a clan, the founder of which is believed to be the common ancestor of the various lineage founders. Lineages, themselves, segment into smaller lineages.) Associated with the tribe is a clan. The clan segments into maximal lineages; maximal lineages into major; major into minor; minor into minimal. Each maximal lineage is associated with a primary section; each major with a secondary; each minor with a tertiary; each minimal with a village community. Although there are several clans within a tribe, one is regarded as dominant, and it is this clan which is associated with the tribe and its lineages with the tribal sections. "Dominance" has a mythological referent, and does not imply any ruler-subject relationship.

A tribe, and each of its sections, has a distinctive name, a common sentiment and unique territory. Indeed, in a sense, tribal sections are like tribes. What distinguishes them is the manner in which intergroup relations is conducted. Between sections of the one tribe, feuds are fought, and compensation is paid for homicide and other torts. Between tribes, however, wars are fought, and compensation is not due. The system of arbitration by which disputes between sections of the one tribe can be settled with minimum blood-shed, has never been extended to regulate intertribal relations.

The tribe does not disintegrate into the sections of which it is built up. For one thing, the division into territorial sections is cut across by many bonds of kinship. The clan, and each lineage within it, is exogamous, i.e., its members must take their spouses from other clans. Thus everyone is necessarily kin to many Nuer of other clans, and the presence of such kin in other villages, other tertiary sections, other

secondary and primary sections, constitutes a network binding the tribal sections together. Too great a development of intratribal hostility is thus inhibited. Indeed, Evans-Pritchard compares the cross-cutting bonds to elastic bands which stretch out in times of injury by one Nuer to another, only to pull the opposing fractions together again.

Ritual is also a mechanism of cohesion. Persons belonging to groups between which there is a blood feud cannot eat or drink with one another. Social relations are severed. This is naturally a further incentive to mend the breach. In negotiating settlements, a ritual officer, the "leopard-skin chief", plays an important role in mediating, though he cannot impose his will on the parties.

Finally, the tribe coheres because the system is such that sections aligned against one another on one occasion will be aligned with one another at some other time. Thus two villages of the same tertiary section may fight, but will close ranks against a village of another tertiary section. Two tertiary sections will fight, but they, too, close ranks against a tertiary section of another secondary section. And so on, until the whole tribe unites as one unit in the event of any of its parts becoming involved against a part of another tribe.

The ecological framework, within which the Nuer are born and live out their days in glad anarchy, necessitates the kind of balance I have described, for in the dry season the village communities must migrate to the rivers where water and pasture exist for their cattle. In migrating, the land of other sections must be crossed, and this is why no part of the whole can be an island entire of itself.

The Tallensi of West Africa<sup>19</sup> also exhibit a segmentary lineage system, in which the cross-cutting network of kinship ties inhibits the whole from disintegrating into its component parts. Again, the equilibrium is added to by the balance of like units for or against one another according to circumstance. Again, ritual is important in helping to stabilise intergroup relations through giving people an incentive to reconcile the offended parties. Ritual, however, does not operate in quite the same way among the Tallensi as among the Nuer.

Homicide is considered a sin against the ancestors and the Earth, as well as an offence against the victim's group. To expiate the deed, the families of killer and killed must offer sacrifices to the ancestors and the Earth; unlike the Nuer, compensation is not paid over to the victim's kin as bloodwealth. And each year, a cycle of festivities takes place in Taleland, a cycle in which each group has an indispensable part to play. All conflicts and disputes must be set aside, for otherwise the people would cease to prosper. Thus the common good is symbolised in ritual, and sectional interests are transcended.

Not all of the politically uncentralised societies of Africa are segmentary lineage systems. I would therefore like to describe how the Ndembu of Northern Rhodesia manage to cohere in spite of, or perhaps because of, the absence of any dominating central authority. The Ndembu are organised in villages, each consisting of men who are matrilineally related. The principle of matrilineal descent (descent

traced through females) contradicts the principle of virilocal marriage (women live in the village of their husband), and tension is thereby inherent in the Ndembu system. Men grow up in their father's village, but have their rights to property in their mother's. Tension is reflected in, for instance, the extreme instability of marriage.

The Ndembu have been studied by V. W. Turner,<sup>20</sup> who makes a detailed examination of how conflict and cohesion are promoted by the dominant structural principles of their society. He uses the term "social drama" to denote the procession of events in which the structural contradictions are reflected in particular instances. Four steps characterise the social dramas. First, occurs a breach of one of the norms. Secondly, conflict mounts until the whole village is aligned on one side or the other. Thirdly, aghast at the split opening up in the village, an attempt is made to correct the balance and restore harmony. Finally, either the breach is mended or it is not. If reconciliation is effected, then the conflict is resolved, but only temporarily, for the contradictory principles inevitably give rise to further disputes. If reconciliation fails, the opposing factions split apart and one founds a new village. Here, too, harmony will be short-lived, for the principles on which Ndembu society is based are in contradiction always.

The culturally-approved solution to inevitable conflicts is the parting of the opposed factions, a never-ending process of fission. And, as among the Tallensi, ritual beliefs and observances function to mend breaches (sometimes) and to restate common values.

The Nuer, the Tallensi, the Ndembu are not representative of all politically uncentralised African societies. The ways in which the individuals born into them handle their problems of social relationships without the intervention of the agents of some centralised institution, gives us an insight into the practicability of decentralism. Which is not to assert that Nuer or Tallensi or Ndembu principles of organisation would be viable for any save the Nuer and the Tallensi and the Ndembu. It is our imaginative grasp of the human condition, our comprehension of the bounds of possibility, which is enriched and furthered in understanding how such societies function; there is no practical lesson for us. Indeed, the whole primitive or near-primitive world is in swift transformation to something else.

I have departed from Dr. Mair's frame of reference in discussing the Tallensi and Ndembu, for she limits herself only to East Africa. I have described the shell, not the kernel; the structural principles and ritual sanctions of the Nuer and Tallensi and Ndembu, not what it feels like to be a Nuer or Tallensi or Ndembu. Empathy can only be truly conveyed by those who have steeped themselves in the life of a primitive people, and, lamentably, not all who have shared the life of primitives have cared to share that experience with their readers (one who has is W. R. Geddes, whose *Nine Dayak Nights* is a more valid guide to the charm of anthropology than a dozen ordinary monographs). And I have discussed only decentralist societies, for the African states of which Dr. Mair writes are infinitely less interesting than, for instance, the

wonderfully anarchic Nuer. Listen to Evans-Pritchard on these Sudan negroes:

The ordered anarchy in which they live accords well with their character, for it is impossible to live among Nuer and conceive of rulers ruling over them.

The Nuer is a product of hard and egalitarian upbringing, is deeply democratic, and is easily aroused to violence. His turbulent spirit finds any restraint irksome and no man recognises a superior. Wealth makes no difference. A man with many cattle is envied by not treated differently from a man with few cattle. Birth makes no difference. A man may not be a member of the dominant clan of his tribe, he may even be of Dinka descent, but were another to allude to the fact he would run a grave risk of being clubbed.

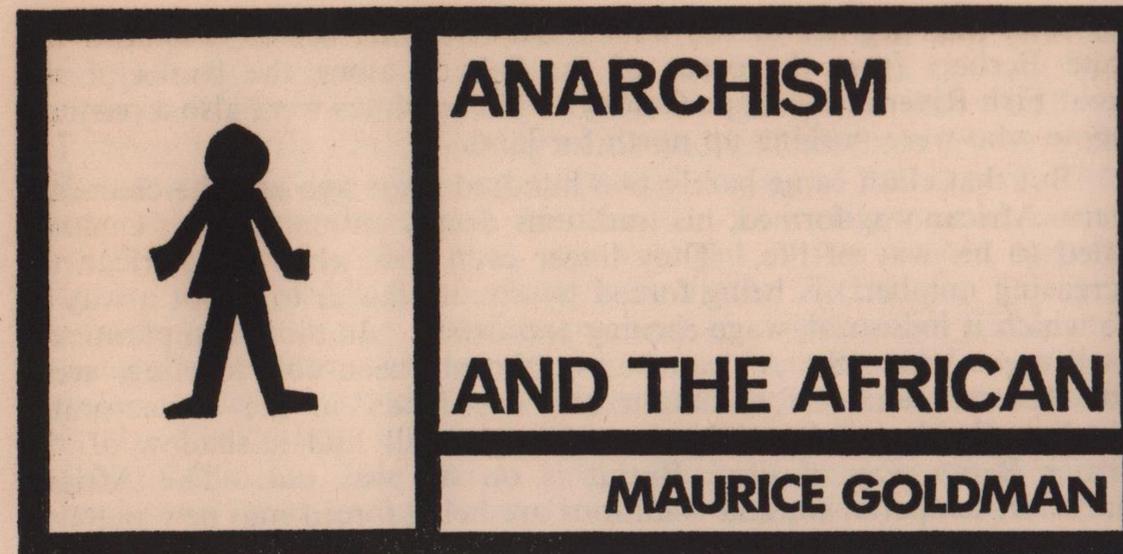
That every Nuer considers himself as good as his neighbour is evident in their every movement. They strut about like lords of the earth, which, indeed they consider themselves to be. There is no master and no servant in their society, but only equals who regard themselves as God's noblest creation.<sup>21</sup>

Compare this with the state societies, of which Dr. Mair notes:

Another characteristic which is shared by rulers, great and small, in East Africa is that they are, or have been when they were independent, privileged to inflict punishments on their subjects of a nature which would not be tolerated in the "anarchic" societies, and for actions which would not be considered offences in the relations between other people.<sup>22</sup>

The transition from primitive society to civil society is a transition from primitive anarchy to the servile state.

1. Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government*, 1962, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 7-9.
2. Ralph Piddington, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Vol. 1, 1962, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 5.
3. Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art*, 1954, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 26-7.
4. Leslie A. White, *The Evolution of Culture*, 1959, New York: McGraw-Hill, 367-8
5. Mair, 16.
6. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems*, 1950, London: OUP, 5.
7. Paul Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 1960, London: Freedom Press, 20.
8. White, 303.
9. *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 1953, Glencoe: The Free Press, 207-8, 346.
10. Mair, 214-33.
11. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, 1952, London: Cohen & West, 212.
12. David Tait, "The Teritorial Pattern and Lineage System of Konkomba" in *Tribes Without Rulers*, 1958, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 186-7.
13. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, London: OUP, 162.
14. Evans-Pritchard, 168.
15. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, 1926, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 55.
16. cf I. Schapera, "Malinowski's Theories of Law" in *Man and Culture*, 1957, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 139-55.
17. Eltzbacher, 186-91.
18. Laura Bohannan, "Political Aspects of Tiv Social Organisation" in *Tribes Without Rulers*, 65-6.
19. M. Fortes, "The Tallensi" in *African Political Systems*, 239-71.
20. V. W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*, 1957, Manchester: University of Manchester Press.
21. Evans-Pritchard, 181-2.
22. Mair, 197.



ACCUSTOMED TO THINKING IN TERMS OF NATIONS, we find it hard enough to recast our thinking from the government-country formula based on heavy central government, defined boundaries, and usually a common language, to the time of Joan of Arc for instance, when people thought in terms of the Church, their village and their feudal lord. How much harder then to visualise and grasp the structure of African society which did not know boundaries, neither bond slavery nor wage slavery, neither land property nor money, neither prisons nor total war not guilt-ridden sex!

There were of course powerful witch doctors and powerful chieftains, but before the social forms were devitalised by contact with the white man's religion and drink, by his land pressure, taxes and system of migrant labour which robbed the tribal areas of their young men, before the white man's industrial revolution urbanised large sections of the African population and white exclusiveness united the blacks in racial and national opposition, the power of the chief and the witch doctor was held by the natural physical and spiritual exuberance of the African temperament.

The Bantu-speaking peoples are believed to have crossed into Africa by way of the Horn of Africa from Asia some three or four thousand years ago. Some intermarried with the original Hamitic people (before the Arab invasion from Arabia), others pushed on westwards to the Atlantic coast where the purest "negroes" are found. They and a group of "negro-Hamitic" people who settled in the region of the Great Lakes in central Africa, displaced the Hottentots, Bushmen and Pygmies from their native haunts. The central Africal Bantu, probably disturbed by convulsions in the north, by land hunger and the natural urge of a pastoral people to trek, began a gradual move down to the south until they eventually clashed with the first white men they

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had seen (the negroes of the west coast had long before displaced the white Berbers from the oases of the Sahara) along the banks of the Great Fish River of the Cape Colony. These whites were also a pastoral people who were pushing up north for land.

But that clash came barely two hundred years ago and the character of the African was formed, his traditions deeply entrenched, his customs suited to his way of life. They linger even now when the African (in increasing numbers) is being forced by circumstances to adopt a way of life which is industrial, wage earning and urban. In those comparatively small areas where the African has stubbornly been able to cling, areas like Reserves and the mountain and dry lands, in the Protectorates like Swaziland and Basutoland, one might still find a shadow of the former Bantu way of life. But it is on the way out. The African character, temperament and traditions are being forced into new patterns which will at the same time keep elements of the old.

These societies which are called democracies today, but which are often plutocracies, being ruled by a few hundred wealthy families and institutions, have something in common with dictatorships—they draw in the reins of authority tightly. A new class of African is growing in Africa besides the industrial wage slaves—these are the politicians who are learning the arts of politics and nationalist power from the nationalisms of the world, and especially from their present or former white masters. They are ambitious and power-hungry people like their white counterparts—the politician class in our society. But there is reason to hope that in Africa, a continent which is widely recognised as the cradle of the human race, a new form of social organisation will arise, springing from tribal roots. If it does arise, it will come from the nature and tradition of the people themselves—*despite* their politicians.

It is no coincidence that there are attempts in some of the newly formed states of Africa to adopt the kibbutz pattern to their tribal structure. Strangely enough it is in the modern sophisticated state of Israel that we might catch a glimpse of the microcosm of future African life.

The kibbutz (a communal and voluntary agricultural settlement with its own small industries suited to its locality) could be the perfect answer as a unit for the new African society. The kibbutz in Israel is linked to the central labour organisation of the Histadrut, independent of the government—but it is practically a self-governing entity.

Of course there are big differences between the kibbutz and the village and tribal units of Africa (and big differences in themselves), but there are basic similarities. Both are peasant, in both there is a large measure of freedom for the individual, both own nearly everything in common, operate their own defence and internal government and work for the common good. I have seen a man get up to argue with his chief at the village council as I have seen a kibbutznik argue at the councils with some committee or other. Both peoples love argument and debate.

In pre-national African society there were no extremes of wealth and poverty, wealth was measured in terms of cattle but not in the impersonal way we know money pieces or land properties. Each head of sheep or cattle was known by name and its idiosyncracies were made allowance for. There was an existential feeling of "encounter" almost, between the herdsman and his flocks. The religion was ancestor worship and the warfare that was indulged in was limited largely to taunts, single combats of champions in the fashion of David and Goliath, to ransoming of prisoners, and to compromise. Mass tribal warfare and destruction began only when the shock of meeting the whites caused a shudder of readjustment right up the east coast of Natal. Chaka was the first African dictator who united the tribes of Natal into the Zulu nation. And Chaka learned his methods from Dingiswayo who learned from Coenraad Buys, the white who took a Hottentot wife and was cast out by the white community—Buys was the king of the Bastards.

The Africans were and are still both a strongly spiritual and a strongly physical people. At one time in the tribe there was a balance of power kept between the chief and the witch doctor but it was rarely that the individual African surrendered soul and body to authority. Ancestors were all too close and created strong family bonds. They were so acutely aware of their bodies (and still are, as may be witnessed by their dancing) that the physical union of man and wife was something very real and thus filial bonds were equally real. Where the family unit is strong (for example in France and Italy) the authority of power cannot reign unchecked, for the family is the only *real* unit in society. It is the brick and mortar of society.

The emotional equipment of the African is certainly no more "savage" than that of the northern peoples. But perhaps they are the most guilt-free of peoples regarding sex, or were so before original sin came their way. Like the Hebrews they have a strong sense of historical continuity and they owe allegiance more to their family ancestors than to any earthly power. They are people of volatile passions and slow moving to hatred. Time and again the writer has found that what will drive Africans to fury is not economics, but mainly the white man's refusal to mingle his blood with theirs, his exclusiveness, his refusal, as one Christian sect leader put it to me, to make *one* nation, *one* people.

It is because of the African's spirit of a universal one-ness that he has taken so readily to the Bible and to Christianity. But Christian missionaries are complaining that the Moslem faith is gaining ground in Africa at the expense of Christianity because the Moslems do not adhere rigidly to monogamy.

Will the industrial revolution eventually sweep through these once tribal lands leaving monolithic industrial states in its wake? My reasons for saying that it won't are firstly that the natures of individual African people do not take to the automation of the factory or to blind obedience to the bosses. Industry might well come in the home craft

tradition of the tribe, or in a form, as I have suggested, like that of the kibbutz. Secondly: a land which has for colonial centuries remained a supplier of raw materials will most likely continue in the primary industry tradition and will therefore remain conservative. What will change will be that the African continent will take less and less of the manufactured products of the northern countries. The communal settlement will be ideal to supply the basic needs for manufactured goods, to be self-subsistent and to satisfy the African desire to be rooted to the soil, and at the same time, to be his own master in a small agricultural-cum-industrial community.

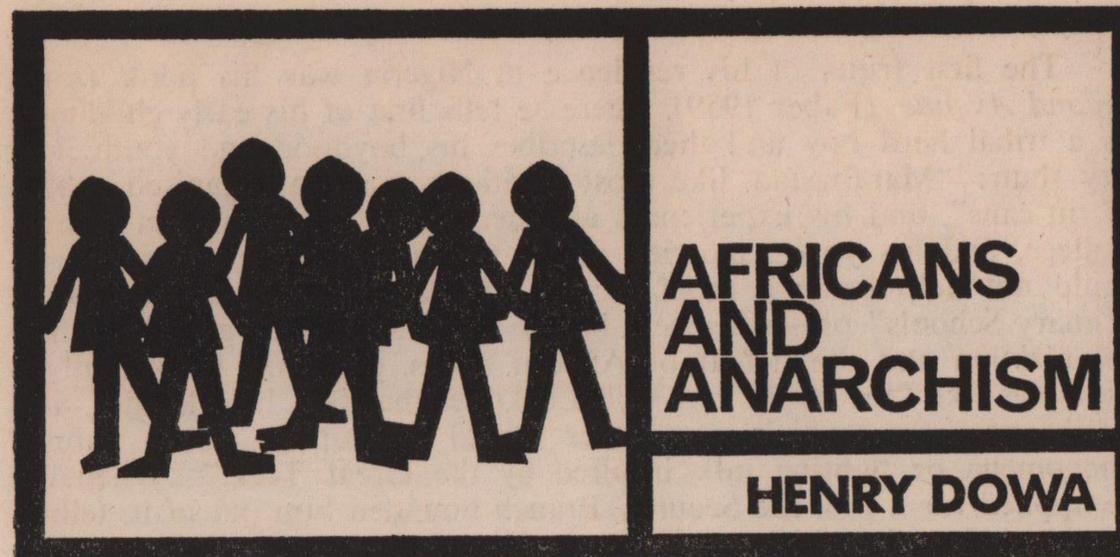
*Let's carry the thing to its logical conclusion. Suppose you do win your freedom. It is bound to be on the basis of black versus white, the latter being in power. And all your talk about not being anti-white—in a multi-racial setting—is just so much tongue-in-cheek stuff. In a Ghanaian or Nigerian setting, nationalism has taken the form of Africanism since the Colonial power abdicated: it is now simply a feeling of being African, and being anti-white is irrelevant.*

*Here, then, you have both the reality and unreality of the position of the Afrikaans and African nationalists (to go back to that awkward terminological distinction!). Paradoxically, the African nationalists do not really present a challenge to the Afrikaans. What does present a challenge is an organisation that consists either in close association or in an alliance of black, white Indian and Coloured. Such a body constituted a negation of the Afrikaans' theory of separateness, their medieval clannishness.*

*What about the non-nationalist—like me? The apparent unreality of my position lies in what turns out now to be an endeavour on my part to civilize a large mob of white tribalists whose every act or attitude is motivated by the primitive instinct of fear. . . .*

*The pain of not being nationalists lies in the cold realism of it. We are aiming at a common society and to prove that multi-racial societies can thrive and become a glorious reality in Africa. The black nationalist in a multi-racial context appeals not only to the most dangerous, because corroding, element of human nature among his people but also to the worst hedgehog qualities of those who would like to crush him. He, of all people, should know this because the Afrikaans nationalist has all through the years been evoking the same response among his own people and from our side. We have watched the Afrikaans and the Natal English shrink and shrivel up within their tribal cocoons; we have seen their minds grow pettier and pettier; we have seen them become more and more barbarous. Yes, they taught us violence, mental and physical, into the bargain. And the decay has not ceased.*

—EZEKIEL MPHABLELE: "The African Image."



I MUST ADMIT THAT IT WAS AS FOOLISH TO AGREE to write under such a title as it would be to write on Europeans and anarchism, in which case I would certainly be asked "What kind of Europeans?" For in Europe, besides people who live in comfort and luxury you will find, if you look, people who live in poverty, people who are virtually slaves, people who are nomadic or who live in holes in the ground. And in Africa you will find, if you look, people who can pay £3,000 for a bed, as well as people who have three or four Cadillacs and fifty slaves. Even in political terms you can find freedom and slavery side by side in both continents.

No, it is better to write about a person than about people. Not a typical person, but can there, except as a statistical fiction, be a typical person? (There are assuredly not any typical people and the typical African is as mythical as the typical European). My non-typical person is Mr. Ezekiel Mphahlele, who took a one-way ticket from South Africa to Nigeria in 1957, having been banned from teaching his own people in his own land. "I had to get out or shrivel up with bitterness," he says, and he now lives with his wife and three children in Nigeria, having first taught at a school in Lagos and more recently become an extra-mural lecturer of the University College, Ibadan.

Whether Mr. Mphahlele is an anarchist by your definition I do not know, but I think he is according to his own: "All my life, people have been at my soul, tugging at it in different directions. I have chafed under unrelenting controls, enthusiastic evangelizing, ruthless police watchfulness. So many other hands have been reaching out for me, and so many voices have been babbling about my ears like the idiotic rattling of wheels of a moving train and I must scream, *leave me alone*. Downright anarchy, downright individualism, you may say.

HENRY DOWA, born in Lagos, 1935, is now at the Polytechnic, London.

I enjoy a fair amount of both, at any rate in my thought-life."

The first fruits of his residence in Nigeria was his book *Down Second Avenue*, (Faber 1959), where he tells first of his early childhood as a tribal herd boy and then describes his boyhood and youth in a city slum: "Marabastad, like most locations, was an organised rubble of tin cans", and his experiences at a secondary school and at Adams College, and his young married life at Orlando. Being a teacher, he could not help being a rebel for the "Code of Syllabuses in Native Primary Schools" prescribed text books of history which glorified white colonization and the defeat of African tribes, grammar books full of examples like "the Kaffir has stolen a knife; that is a lazy Kaffir", and Afrikaans verse "which was either lyrical vapourings about natural phenomena or fighting talk inspired by the Great Trek." Whenever he applied for a job, the Security Branch hounded him out of it, telling employers how he had been dismissed for subversive activities. Finally he went to teach at his own old school, then supervised by Father Trevor Huddleston, where he could be paid from school funds and not from the government. The school, like the college he had attended was closed by government decree in 1956, and then he went to work for the magazine *Drum*, though his outlook resisted *Drum's* "arbitrary standard of what the urban African wants to read: sex, crime and love stories". His wife too had quit teaching when Verwoerd, then Minister for African Affairs "made it clear that African teachers were going to be used for training children as slaves."

When he arrived in Nigeria, Mr. Mphahlele found a glorious sense of release. This Nigerian sun, he says, "will burn up at least such prejudice and bitterness and hate of thirty-seven years as haven't grown into my system like kikuyu grass." That was several years ago. Since then Mr. Mphahlele has visited Britain, the United States and Paris and, back in Nigeria has "been chafing and trying to readjust my underdog mentality—in short, to live with freedom."

Partly to clear his own mind he has written a new book on *The African Image* (Faber and Faber 1962, 21s.). Half of this book is a literary excursion into "The White Man's Image of the Non-White in Fiction" and into "The Black Man's Literary Image of Himself". He is critical of the bulk of the former literature, finding the best writers to be those who have a disinclination to recognize boundaries in human character and whose characterization "follows no prescriptions usually determined by the "race problem".

On the latter literature his comments of special interest are on the flowering of West African literature which he finds to be very different from that of his own country. "There are not, in West Africa the anger, impatience, restlessness, moodiness, romantic violence and the self-assertive laughter which hit the various planes of South African expression." In West Africa, he believes, because of the large communities of illiterate and unsophisticated folk, "and the resultant wide gulf between the educated man and the uneducated, the clash between the old and the new is much sharper than you can ever see

in the South. And the artist in West Africa is preoccupied with this clash." His special praise is for the Ghanaian poet Efu Sutherland, and the Nigerian poets Gabriel Okara and Wole Soyinka, and for the powerful Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, whose great book *Things Fall Apart* (which has just been reprinted by Heinemann's in a five shilling edition) tells of the historical clash between the old life and the new in an Ibo clan. The story is told with that detachment which is Mr. Mphahlele's own literary aim: the struggle, as he puts it "to express the larger irony which is the meeting point between acceptance and rejection, once he has felt the impact of Western civilisation."

In his chapter on "The African Personality" Mr. Mphahlele discusses whether or not this "charming phrase" really means anything at all; "*Négritude*" he finds to be little more than a cult among returning exiles who had the misfortune to be educated in France, and about African Nationalism in Southern Africa he declares that "If nationalism is the antithesis of tribalism, then I am a nationalist. But if, in a multi-racial society, a nationalist's object is to replace a white dictatorship with black fascism, to replace, say, Afrikaner tribalism with black chauvinism, then I can't go along with him." This is his faith in the future of South Africa: "I personally cannot think of the future of my people in South Africa as something in which the white man does not feature. Whether he likes it or not, our destinies are inseparable . . . The white man has detribalised me. He had better go the whole hog. He must know that I'm the personification of the African paradox, detribalised, Westernized, but still African—minus the conflicts."

Capitalist economy, he points out to the reader, has for a long time been battering on African traditions. "Our traditional forms of communism and communal responsibility in which the land belongs to the people under the chief's trusteeship, co-operative farming, and so on, are fast going. Private enterprise is setting in. Africans have amassed capital and have enormous interests in property, for all the talk of Socialism in certain parts of West Africa. Programmes for redistribution of land and other social reforms do not exist in such parts."

The saddest thing in Mr. Mphahlele's book is his comparative assessment of the position of the "educated African" in both South and West Africa. In the South, "It is a lonely man who is not taken seriously by his own people yet cannot keep aloof from them and their daily miseries." On the other hand, in the former colonies, "The educated African in a colonial context has thus merely stepped into the colonial administrator's shoes. In certain cases he will not like too many enlightened people near him and will like to keep the masses in the dark. Will he have the moral courage to resist this temptation to entrench himself?"

This writer is as bitterly critical of the set-up in his adopted country as of his native land:

Two things stand out uppermost in this colonial pattern. First, is the fact that the British administration has a quiet way of according such special treatment to the educated African as to cut him off from the masses. And then there is the terrible legacy of the British class system. The second results from the first; this distance between the enlightened and the unenlightened makes it virtually impossible for the ignorant to remedy any defection among the ruling classes, whom they idolise with the same reverence that they accord the chief.

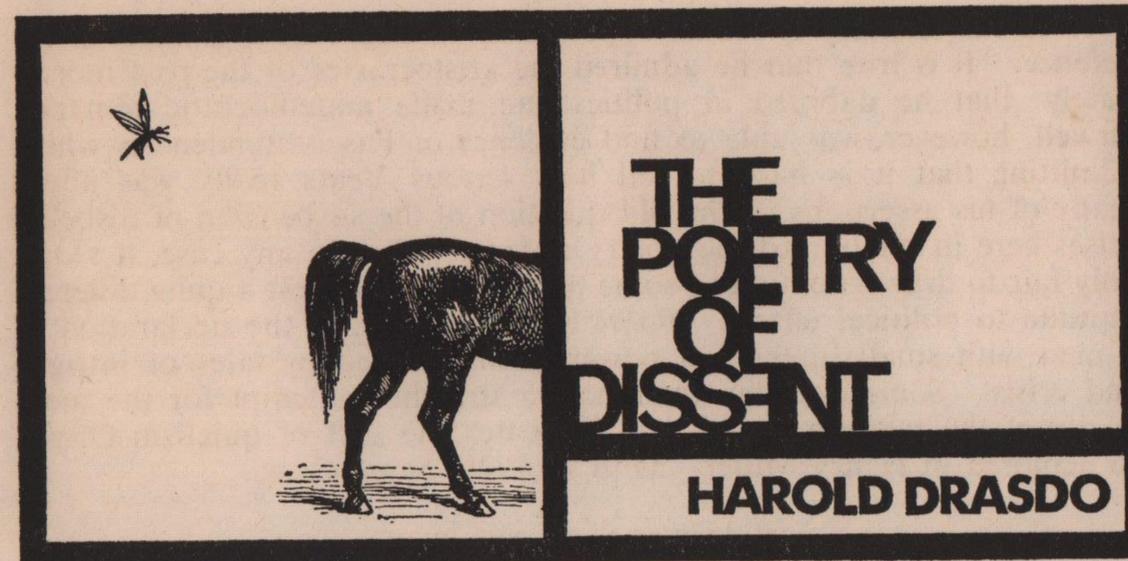
The class distinction I intimate is felt subtly among the educated class. Occupational rank and income seem to determine this class consciousness. Since coming to Nigeria two years ago, I have sensed this, tried to ignore or excuse it. But it has kept imposing itself on me. Then I came to realise that the main concern of the average educated African in Nigeria is to get into Government service, which affords him civil servants' quarters, a car, at least two servants and a comfortable living . . .

Cultural activity becomes the business mainly of those in the lower strata who find their lives empty without some ritual or other. Extra-mural lectures and week-end schools organised by the university college had a bias for studies in government and economics . . . In contrast to this, the Negro in Southern Africa, who is denied a share in government, finds an escape and self-expression in intensive cultural interest—music festivals, choral activity, jive sessions, jazz bands and troupes, writing.

These charges are exaggerated and they could easily be answered, but their value is as an antidote to complacency. They show how freedom cannot tame him any more than oppression could defeat him. He remains the most anarchic voice in African literature, and not a completely lonely one.

*In South Africa, we non-whites are fashioning a proletarian culture that is a compromise between the traditional and the modern. What would be the point of moaning about "our traditional culture," much of which has been knocked about as a result of military conquest, economic and industrial activity, the migrant labour system which destroys communal and family life, the removal of whole communities from place to place by government decree, the conscious efforts of old-fashioned missionaries, etc.? To fight a rearguard action by trying to revive a pure traditional culture among 5,000,000 urbanised non-whites, 3,000,000 detribalised labour tenants on white people's farms or to arrest the situation among the remaining 3,000,000 unsettled Africans in the rural reserves, would be unrealistic—and even fatal—for our efforts to break down the present political structure.*

—EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE.



TRADITIONALLY, POETRY IS A STRONGHOLD OF FREEDOM. More precisely it has been used as the vehicle for all manner of ideas, including restrictive ones. But since, at this critical moment, authority is seen limiting the lives and thoughts of men in ways previously unimaginable; and since we have the benefit of an always clearer view of history and human possibility: then it is natural to expect to find modern poetry increasingly at grips with the state or its outward signs. If, however, someone were to ask today's dissentients where to find this body of poetry it is probable that each group would recommend first to him those poets associated with it, at some time, by active participation or apparent alignment. Socialists might suggest he search the work of the Auden coterie, as it stood before the war. Anarchists might advise him to try Sir Herbert Read or Alex Comfort. A part of the unclassified resistance might refer him to Christopher Logue, Alan Sillitoe, or the West Coast writers. Unhappily, a discriminating reader would quickly see that, saving perhaps Auden, the most gifted of these poets have somehow seemed unable to use their talents to best advantage on these themes. And, in fact, it appears impossible to gather from these sources a reasonably-sized collection which is at once good poetry and forceful criticism.

On the other hand, if you start from the mainstream of recent English poetry—including some Americans who can't be overlooked—you will find attacks upon the state and comment on politics and social affairs in the most surprising places. This survey makes note of some of them without suggesting that there has been any sort of movement. Attempts to correlate 'tendencies' and styles are often ill-founded and even Orwell can be seen in uncertainty about this matter in his rather unfair essay on Yeats. This makes a useful starting point.

Yeats died in 1939 but his last poems are at least as impressive as anything he wrote and since he is generally taken to be the greatest

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poet of this century it seems appropriate to begin with a word in his defence. It is true that he admired the aristocracies of the past inordinately; that he dabbled in politics and made undemocratic remarks. Orwell, however, was able to find evidence of Fascist tendencies whilst admitting that it is hard to tell how serious Yeats really was about many of his assertions. The old question of the suspension of disbelief arises here in relation to the poetry at least. But, in any case, it seems only fair to draw attention to some poems which suggest a quite different attitude to political affairs. *Politics*, for instance, is the declaration of a man with small interest in power, a man bored by tales of intrigue and crisis. Sometimes he announces a straight contempt for the mendacity of the modern world and advocates the sort of quietism Orwell so deplored in Henry Miller—as in *The Old Stone Cross*.

A statesman is an easy man  
He tells his lies by rote;  
A journalist makes up his lies  
And takes you by the throat;  
So stay at home and drink your beer  
And let the neighbours vote. . . .

One can also admire his curt refusal to compromise himself in *On Being Asked For A War Poem*; or point to the epigrams *The Great Day* and *Parnell* as evidence of an intelligent cynicism about revolutions and governments.

Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man:  
'Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stone.'

With one exception, these poems were written during the last three years of his life.

Of the small group of poets still writing who drew attention as far back as the mid-twenties the most incisive is the American E. E. Cummings; by preference, e. e. cummings. Initially he had a reputation for obscurity but this was mainly owing to a lack of confidence in readers confronted for the first time with his typographical tricks. Most of his work is not especially difficult and though not wide in scope it often has a tender or rapturous lyricism without parallel in modern poetry. Added to this he is not afraid to say what he thinks about current affairs and says it forcefully with wit, irony and passion. To set the tone there is his definition: a politician is an arse upon/ which everyone has sat except a man. Some of his pieces are required reading for those interested in the political scene. No chauvinist or militarist has ever been deflated so adroitly as the one in the poem which begins 'next to of course god america i/love you'. The poem written in memory of a conscientious objector—*i sing of Olaf glad and big*—is a wonderful satire, urgent with anger and compassion. Cummings lashes those who think 'to differ a disease of some/conform the pinnacle of am'. And his loathing of communism is not reflected

in a satisfaction with American affairs—

so rah-rah-rah democracy  
let's all be as thankful as hell  
and bury the statue of liberty  
(because it begins to smell)

It has often been noticed that the last war produced no body of poetry like that of the Trench Poets. Certainly, there is a difference in the general tone, sometimes an actual resignation typified perhaps by Keith Douglas: 'Remember me when I am dead/and simplify me when I'm dead'. Or despair or disgust are masked by a fine irony as in Henry Reed's *Naming Of Parts*. But one short poem deserves attention as standing comparison with anything Orwell or Sassoon wrote: Randall Jarrell's *The Death Of The Ball Turret Gunner*.

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.  
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,  
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

Jarrell, as you see, is pessimistic about the chances of the individual today. He concludes an interesting essay on Alex Comfort by agreeing that the state is the chief enemy, but finishes—

Yet when one considers the mechanisms of contemporary states—from the advertising agencies that turn out their principles to the aircraft factories that turn out their practice—it is hard to think of the triumph of any proletariat as more than a wistful, compensating dream: it is we who wither away, not the state.

If it were true, however, that the Second World War did not produce the sort of poetry that might have been expected, some poets have, at any rate, already turned their attention to the next: as if in recognition of the risk that after that nuclear Doomsday there may be no-one left to write or read. Edwin Muir, who is conspicuous amongst these, first became known for his translations into English of Kafka's nightmare worlds of authority and the individual; and his own poetry is pervaded by a like obsessive sense of disquiet. The poetry, which only drew full acknowledgment towards the end of his life, is not easily represented by brief quotation. It has no clear affinity with any other modern work. Its apparent flatness vanishes on hearing a sympathetic reading. During his last years Muir obviously became pre-occupied with the fear of a final holocaust and three poems use the three possible consequences of such a war. In *The Day Before The Last Day*, written shortly before his death in 1959 he envisages the annihilation of life—'Mechanical parody of the Judgment Day/That does not judge but only deals damnation'; he reveals his 'imaginary picture of a stationary fear'. *The Horses* tells of a farming community which has survived 'the seven days war that put the world to sleep' and which is discovering that life without tractors and radios is possible after all; the people are reconciled to the uncanny silence and tranquility.

*After a Hypothetical War* assumes, by contrast, the wreck of civilised values, an earth of miscegenation and waste. Muir treats of other aspects of modern politics too: in *Nightmare Of Peace* we are with the United Nations.

Even in a dream how were we there  
Among the commissars of peace  
And that meek humming in the air  
From the assenting devotees?  
Police disguised on every chair  
Up on the platform. Peace was there  
In hands where it would never stir.  
Aloft a battle-plated dove  
Throned over all in menacing love.

Several good poems which are directly, or by implication, 'anti-bomb' have appeared during the last ten years. One has found its way into a popular school anthology: *The Birds* by Clive Sansom—who has had another poem, *Loyalties*, which lists worship of the state as a betrayal of individuality. Robert Conquest and I. A. Richards have neat little attacks on nuclear weapons. From John Wain there is *A Song About Major Eatherly*. It is symptomatic, though, that Edith Sitwell in *Three Poems Of The Atomic Age* simply incorporates eye-witness accounts of the explosions into her poems in support of her own pyrotechnics: 'Then to the murdered Sun a totem pole of dust arose in memory of Man.' As if the experience were too immediate, the reports of the survivors too anguished, to warrant interference or embellishment. Indeed, the reader of such works as John Hersey's 'Hiroshima' and Robert Jungk's 'Brighter Than A Thousand Suns' may be uncomfortably aware that the descriptions of the actual explosions first lay claim on him in the generalised manner of poetry and might even tend to inhibit somewhat the response that their context must arouse. This seduction by magnitude or sensation is something the propagandist must weigh carefully.

Of all the English poets who have made reputations since the war it might only be said of one that his work is very often the direct expression of his social conscience. This is D. J. Enright. His poetry seems at first glance rather erudite and mannered owing to the occasional and reverberatingly poetic phrases. But a good reader will quickly feel the force of Enright's work and find in it a sense of compassion and an integrity seldom shown in social contexts at present. Enright, who has travelled widely in the war-reduced countries of Europe and the Far East, might almost be called the poet of hunger. He writes about poverty, exile, starvation, prostitution, the offences of the state against the individual, the opportunism of politicians.

The only enigma that I saw  
Was the plump sayings of the politicians  
Against the thin faces of the poor.

*The Monuments Of Hiroshima* may well be the best thing yet written

on that city. The mood of this poem makes one think back to such pieces as Sassoon's *At The New Merin Gate*. Enright has a directness and an ironic intelligence which save him from sentimentalism. He concludes—

Little of peace for them to rest in, less of them  
to rest in peace:  
Dust to dust a swift transition, ashes to ash  
with awful ease.  
Their only monument will be of other's casting—  
A Tower of Peace, a Hall of Peace, a Bridge of Peace  
—who might have wished for something lasting,  
Like a wooden box.

Writing about hunger, in *Where Charity Begins* and *The Short Life Of Kazuo Yamamoto*, he contrasts the verbal world of the politicians with the real world of the victims.

Elsewhere the great ones have their headaches, too,  
As they grapple with those notable tongue-twisters  
Such as Liberation and Oppression.  
But they were not talking about you,  
Kazuo, who found rat poison cheaper than aspirin.

His sympathy is extended to starving animals too, as in the sharp little epigram *Asiatic Premises*, where it becomes an indictment.

This largish whitish newish building is devoted  
to the study of the Liberal Arts and the Humanities.  
Under the surrounding hedges lie the minute and bloated  
bodies of starved kittens. Vanity of vanities.

These poems are in no sense occasional observation or comment but begin and end in a flat and sometimes premonitory rejection of power politics.

But the politicians live in their own climate,  
The cold chairs where they incubate  
A future spring of plum and peach and cherry, in superb mutations.  
Blossoming across the blind and ruined nations.

Complementary to this is his feeling for the individual sufferer, especially the political refugee; best exemplified in the beautiful *Meeting An Egyptian At A Cocktail Party*. Of course, Enright devotes himself to other, quite different themes, too: notably the arts, criticism, and impressions of place. From a social standpoint 'Bread Rather Than Blossoms' is the most interesting of his books of verse.

In conclusion, what can be said about the state of poetry today? The last decade has seen the appearance of a handful of excellent poets. Enright might be included amongst these but what of the others?—Ted Hughes, Philip Larkin, Thom Gunn, Burns Singer, Elizabeth Jennings, C. A. Trypanis, Donald Davie. The critic cannot

ignore the astonishing absence of social comment in their work. Indeed, he might draw attention to such a poem as Davie's *Too Late For Satire*. Davie has the elegance, clarity, and point of the perfect satirist; and he knows this but through a lamentable fatalism declines the task—

I might have been as pitiless as Pope  
But to no purpose; in a tragic age  
We share the hatred but we lack the hope  
By pinning follies to reform the age.  
To blame is lame and satirists are late.  
No knife can stick in history or the id,  
No cutlass carve us from the lime of fate.

To go further, the critic might consider *A Woman Unconscious*, an impressive piece by Ted Hughes. Hughes visualises an atomic war which might expunge all living things—'the toil of all our ages a loss with leaf and insect'; then he rejects his fancy as melodramatic and (by dubious extension) not conforming to the pattern of history; until, reverting to the original idea he compares the extinction of all life with the loss of consciousness, or death, of a single woman—

And though bomb be matched against bomb,  
Though all mankind wince out and nothing endure—  
Earth gone in an instant flare—  
Did a lesser death come  
Onto the white hospital bed  
Where one, numb beyond her last of sense,  
Closed her eyes on the world's evidence  
And into pillows sunk her head.

This sort of solipsism must seem to many to be maddeningly perverse. Indeed, it would be amusing, were it not for the sense of crisis, that readers who have always insisted that poetry can ignore morality may now find themselves—oppressed by the urgent final threat of a nuclear war—impelled to prescribe attitudes and themes for the poet. If, however, this feeling of urgency can be put aside, a quite different evaluation of the trend of contemporary poetry may be made. Negatively, it can be said that from this social standpoint the best of the younger poets almost never sin by commission. Whilst positively, it is plain that the only characteristic that unites them is the fact that no two of them have much in common: they are committed to quite personal explorations. If this is escape, it is affirmation too.

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Collected Poems by W. B. Yeats. (Macmillan, 1958, 18/-.)  
E. E. Cummings: *Selected Poems 1923-1958*. (Faber and Faber, 1958, 18/-.)  
Randall Jarrell: *Selected Poems*. (Faber and Faber, 1958, 15/-.)  
Edwin Muir: *Collected Poems 1921-1958*. (Faber and Faber, 1960, 25/-.)  
D. J. Enright: *Bread Rather Than Blossoms*. (Secker and Warburg, 1956, 10/6.)  
Ted Hughes: *Lupercal*. (Faber and Faber, 1960, 12/6d.)  
Donald Davie's 'Too Late For Satire' is in the anthology *New Lines* edited by Robert Conquest. (Macmillan, 1956, 12/6d.)

## Peter Kropotkin

### THE STATE: Its Historic Rôle

This classic of anarchist thought begins with a description of a the free societies, primitive and mediaeval, which existed before the development of centralised power in the modern era (or which, in the case of certain primitive societies in Kropotkin's own day, even contrived to exist in a world for the most part dominated by increasingly centralised States). There follows a description of the way in which these free societies disintegrated under the impact of the rising power of authority in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. And finally, analysing the way in which the State has developed since its origin, Kropotkin reaches the conclusion that, if it is allowed to expand unrestrictedly, it will mean social destruction and a new and more terrible Dark Age:

"Either the State will be destroyed and a new life will begin in thousands of centres, on the principle of an energetic initiative of the individual, of groups, and of free agreement, or else the State must crush individual and local life, it must become the master of all the domains of human activity, must bring with it wars and international struggles for the possession of power, its surface revolutions which only change one tyrant for another, and inevitably, at the end of this evolution—death."

This conclusion must have seemed far-fetched and apocalyptic in Kropotkin's own day, but his warning has been amply fulfilled in a world of all-pervasive government and ever more destructive wars. The argument of this pamphlet is indeed at the heart of the present debates on the future of the campaign in many countries against nuclear weapons and was never more timely and relevant.

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